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**COLORADO
WORKS**
Earning, Learning, Thriving



**Colorado Department
of Human Services**
people who help people

DIRECT FROM THE DIRECTOR...

Time does fly, doesn't it? It is hard to believe that we are nearing the end of 2012 and next week, many of us will gather around a table with our loved ones and give thanks for all that we have – our home, our health, our family, and much more. I want to take this opportunity to let you know how thankful we are for you, the work you do, and the sacrifices that you make each day for the good of the families we serve!

In addition to November being associated with giving thanks and eating too much, it is also Colorado Homeless and Runaway Youth Month. Reflecting on the two as I write this article, I cannot help but think of the families that are struggling with the lack of both food and consistent, safe, and affordable housing, and what more we can do for them. So, I offer this for you to consider:

Consider the Facts: There are misconceptions in our communities around homelessness. Some believe that the majority of those who are homeless are single adult males with mental health and/or substance abuse disorders just because they are more visible on the streets. The reality is that the fastest growing homeless groups in the nation are families with children, many who are employed and have attended college and even graduated. Another misunderstanding is that the majority of the homeless population is in a chronic situation, where they are involved in either long- term or repeated spells of homelessness. The truth is that this group represents a smaller percentage of the entire homeless population. According to the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative's January 2012 homelessness census, of the 12,605 homeless people in Denver in January 2012, a quarter was experiencing homelessness for the first time.

Consider Reframing: Evaluate what you believe about those who are homeless so you are better able to assist them. Do your best to see beyond biases about psychological, emotional, or



other factors affecting people in a housing crisis. Know that homelessness often does not occur because of bad choices—it happens because of unrealistic choices, like choosing between paying medical bills or the rent. Also consider that homeless youth are homeless because of various reasons, some of those are related to finally being able to escape abuse and neglect they've suffered over their life span.

Consider Assessment and Resources: We all know there are not enough of these to go around, especially right now when needs are at an all-time high and resources are at an all-time low, but resources do exist. The first resource is your ability to identify needs through a comprehensive family-centered assessment. If you see, for example, a family is transient and has moved several times in a short period of time and/or carries most of their belongings with them into your office; it is time to ask some additional questions! Other resources include using TANF to stabilize the family before you negotiate an IRC with them to look for work, get training, or participate in other work activities. Remember Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs!

Additional Resources:

Statewide list of emergency homeless shelters and transitional housing opportunities:
<http://www.homelessshelterdirectory.org/colorado.html>

National Resource Directory for veterans, service members and families who support them:
<https://www.nrd.gov/state/colorado>

General information on statewide homeless support systems:
<http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/CDHS-BehavioralHealth/CBON/1251581872726>

In closing, I realize you all play many roles in the lives of needy families in Colorado. You are called upon to be a counselor, a mentor, a therapist, a referral source and so much more, and then you have a role in your family and community too. With that said, please take time to celebrate your successes as they come and know that even if you are not seeing progress, you are planting a seed that may grow much later in that person's life. Thank you again for your commitment to your work!

Levetta Love

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DRILLING DOWN!

On Homelessness and Child Protection

This section of the newsletter addresses specific Colorado Works rules that counties have asked the state office to clarify, mostly through the Coworks.Issues e-mail.

Homeless and Pending Verification

Q1: We have a woman and her newborn son who are currently homeless with a potential for child welfare involvement. Mother applied for Colorado Works this past Monday, and her son was born last Friday, but has not yet been issued a birth certificate. She does not get Medicaid assistance, so we took this case on an expedited basis and would love to approve her for the Colorado Work Program.



Is there any leeway in this situation to help this family with Colorado Works benefits? Or do we have to wait for the issuance of a birth certificate?

A1: Certainly, there is flexibility in obtaining minimum eligibility verifications. **A birth certificate is not a required document to be eligible for Colorado Works;** it is just one of many verification types or sources that can be used to verify Citizenship and Lawful Presence. A Hospital Record on letterhead would be another acceptable verification source for citizenship in this case. Work with your clients to help them obtain acceptable verification documentation, particularly if they are in a homeless situation. If anything is questionable, then additional verification can be requested.

Also, in this case and all cases, use your best judgment in making decisions about whether or not to involve child welfare.

Terminated Rights

Q2: A caseworker has a question regarding a placement of a youth with her mother, whose rights were terminated years ago. The child is now 16 and wants to live with mother, who also wants this, but has exceeded her 60 month limit on TANF. Child Welfare has done a home study to approve this setting.

The Agency Letter titled Clarification of Parental Rights - #TCW-02-7-1 from 5/2002 states "In circumstances when a court order exists where the parent-child relationship has been terminated, and the parent returns to live with the dependent child, the parent is no longer a required member of the assistance unit, but they are considered a caretaker relative within the 5th degree of kinship. As a caretaker relative, they can apply for Colorado Works. At that point, just as other caretaker relatives (other than the natural/adoptive parent) they can choose to be included in the assistance unit."

Is mom able to apply for a child-only grant?

A2: If Child Welfare has verified that the child has returned back with the mother, the mother could be considered the specified caretaker of the child. Because the parent is the biological mother who has responsibility of the child, she would be a mandatory member of the assistance unit. However, in this case, since she has used her full 60 months, the assistance unit would not be eligible to receive assistance unless she was granted a hardship extension. This would not be considered a child-only case.

The agency letter referred to is out of date. The most up to date agency letter on can be found at <http://www.colorado.gov/cdhsdocs/tcw121p.pdf>

County-Approved Setting for Minor Parents

Q3: We have a client (little mom) who just turned 17 years old and has a newborn baby boy. They are presently both living with a family friend. Grandmother (big mom) recently moved to another county. Little mom chose to stay in our county to finish her schooling.

According to rule, a minor parent can be on TANF as long as they are in a county approved setting. We understand the goal for this client is to have a stable environment, to maintain school attendance, and to take care of her child. We know who she is living with and have pulled court records for the adults in the home. We have also checked with child welfare regarding recent referrals.

Would you please provide additional guidance on approving the setting for a minor parent?

A3: Generally speaking the county-approved setting should be safe for both the minor parent and the child. It should be a stable environment that, yes, is conducive to helping the minor parent be successful in school or an equivalent activity. Beyond that, it is up to counties to determine whether particular situations meet these criteria. County policies may/should outline

what constitutes a county-approved setting. With this in mind, it really comes down to your judgment. Just remember to always document your case.

Q4: Our client is living in a shelter for domestic violence victims.

Would this be considered a county approved setting for a 17 year old and her child?

A4: A domestic violence shelter could be considered a county approved setting; however conditions related to determining county approved settings should be outlined in your county policy.

We would suggest the county work with the 17 year old to find permanent, safe and stable housing. Counties should assist minor parents under age 18 who are otherwise eligible and are not living in a county approved living arrangement to find an approved arrangement.

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PROGRAM ALIGNMENT AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES RULES REWRITE (NOT PHASE III)

Colorado Works is in the process of implementing certain program rules to further align with other programs and increase the focus on outcomes related to employment. The purpose of the new rules is to support employment focused outcomes and reduce administrative burdens on workers. Over the next several months we will be working with the State Board, county and third party stakeholders on finalizing changes. The rule changes will impact the following areas:

- New program reporting requirements, including the elimination of MSRs
- Implementation of a certification period
- Simplified income disregard calculations, and
- New earned income calculations

We are aiming for the rule changes to become effective July 1, 2013. Colorado Works will provide regional training and the In The Weeds newsletters beginning March 2013. There will be ongoing progress updates provided in our monthly newsletters and County Administrators meeting. And the June 2013 Professional Development Academy will also emphasize these changes.

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TANF FISCAL INFORMATION

The Works Allocation Committee (WAC) is the statutory committee created to distribute the TANF County Block Grant. The WAC is required to consider demographic and economic data in distributing the block grant. The allocation for SFY 13 was finalized and is reflected in COFRS. The WAC also distributes TANF mitigation funds and reallocates any reversions from TANF reserves. The WAC will meet November 26, at the CCI Winter Meeting in Colorado Springs. Colorado Works will present information to the committee about how counties have historically used their block grants.

The Governor's Budget for SFY 14 was introduced to the General Assembly on November 1. The TANF budget proposal does not propose changes to the County Block Grant Line. However, assumptions are made regarding how much the federal government will be sending to the state.

The TANF program and funding were extended through March 2013. Colorado Works will continue to monitor discussions on the federal level, specifically any potential program or fiscal changes.

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PROGRAM INTEGRITY UPDATES

We would like to thank everyone who has been working on the process improvement and timeliness changes over the past several months. Your commitment to improving the processes within your county are evident based on the timeliness numbers for new applications, and we continue to increase our ability to process timely redeterminations as well! In October YOU, county staff, were able to timely process new applications 99.08%. Redeterminations slightly increased to 86%. We will continue to work toward the 95% timely processing goal for redeterminations by our milestone date of January 2013!

Tier I & II Case Review Update

So what is new for us? A few things! The Colorado Works program will soon be out in the counties conducting a revised process for management evaluations. The focus of our visits will be to assess the overall implementation of the Colorado Works program in your county. This will include reviews of new cases, previously reviewed cases that required follow up, contracts, access, policies, and other areas of business. Our goal is to assess the effectiveness of the program overall, understand how the purposes of TANF are being met, how your county has made employment a key objective, and work with your individual county to improve the services provided to Coloradans statewide.

Beginning in January 2013, the formal case file review process will also be modified to incorporate a new report for counties to "pull" the monthly 5% sample. The program has also revised the Tier II Supervisory Review Instrument for counties to utilize as well as several other changes. The focus in reviewing cases will shift to looking more at the case management and interaction with the customer. Some changes are:

- Identifying what barriers and supports are present
- Verifying that the case manager is including the customer in the development of the overall plan
- Describing the progress the participant is making with their case manager, working as a partner in the process
- Identifying the employment focused outcome(s) they are working towards for the participant

Our staff understands that the goal for some customers is not employment and recognizes that no two plans will look alike. It is our hope that through this process, counties will be able to continue to review the minimum requirements needed to make an eligibility determination, while focusing on the individual needs of each customer. We are working on streamlining the case review process to reflect the growing caseloads in the counties and hope these changes reflect those goals.

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CBMS UPDATES

One of the CBMS program updates being implemented in a December 2012 build is the ability to create a random sample of cases from the system. This means going forward each county will be able to access the list and pull their cases for the 5% supervisor reviews. Colorado Works staff will no longer send out a list of cases with this information. More information will be coming out before January about the updated forms, process and CBMS changes.



Packet/Re-Assessment Letter Received Date Field Changes with Project 2324 - June 2012

When Project 2324 was implemented, an edit was added on the Packet/Re-Assessment Letter Received Date field in the Edit RRR Details screen of CBMS. The edit locks the field down once it has been completed with a valid date and the screen has been saved. We recognize now that there are instances where county workers may have accidentally entered an incorrect date.

For instance, Colorado Works (CW) State Program Area staff recently suggested using the Monthly Status Report (MSR) in place of the RRR. We are hearing that workers are inadvertently entering the following month's MSR packet received date as the RRR's Packet/Re-Assessment Letter Received Date. So let's say you have an RRR for October 2012, October passes and now it is November 7th, the final day for clients to return their MSR timely (for payment in December). Workers are inadvertently entering 12/07/2012 as the RRR Packet/Re-Assessment Letter Received Date, which is causing CW to prorate benefits incorrectly for December. Instead of using the received date of the MSR for December payment, workers should be using the received date of the MSR for November payment (i.e., 11/7/2012).

Entering the wrong date will cause problems with CW, not to mention Adult Financial (AF) or Food Assistance (FA) where it will fail these programs due to the RRR not being received by the last day of the RRR month. For CW, you can enter Good Cause in these situations and not have December's benefits prorated, but for AF and FA, complete a new Application Initiation (AI). Please pay close attention to the Packet/Re-Assessment Letter Received Date field and make sure the date entered is correct since it cannot be changed, once entered. State program areas are working to remove this edit as soon as possible, but wanted to make counties aware of the issue.

On another note, CW State Program Area staff has also received several CoWorks.Issues emails regarding the recent rule change that eliminated the Income Deductions for Supplied Need Standard Components Rule (3.611.6). Effective 9/1/2012, CW no longer has deductions for these two components. In CBMS, you'll need to effective end date your Free Shelter and/or Free Utilities records in the Shelter Expense screen, 8/31/2012. This will ensure that these deductions are no longer applied to the CW benefit and will result in a valid restoration for September 2012 forward. This should be done on a case-by-case basis when processing the next MSR or RRR. In June 2013, when we implement Project 2548 - Simplified Reporting & 6-Month Certification Period, we will remove from CBMS the logic that currently looks for the Free Shelter & Free Utilities shelter types.

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SPOTLIGHT ON COLORADO WORKS STAFF

Jennifer Morganto

Jennifer Morganto has worked in Colorado Works for 2½ years, where she has served as a Program Specialist for the Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Initiative, the Project Manager of the Personal Responsibility Education Program, and most recently the Team Lead of the Training & Staff Development Unit. Before coming to CDHS, she was a Program Manager at a non-profit overseeing Federal and State funded prevention programs. She has also worked for the Federal government, overseeing the U.S. Army's Exceptional Family Member Program in Ansbach, Germany coordinating resources and services for families with disabilities. She has a Bachelor of Science in Cognitive Science with an emphasis on Speech and Language Pathology from the University of Texas at Dallas. Her biggest job, and the one of which she is proudest, is to be "mommy" to her toddler son.



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TRIVIA

Where was the first permanent European settlement in Colorado?

[Answer](#)

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TANF RELATED NEWS AND REPORTS

Urban Partnerships Initiative Online Toolkit, October 2012

from [Welfare Peer TA](#)

Developed by the *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance*, the *Urban Partnerships Initiative* is a project designed to improve outcomes for low-income families by facilitating peer exchange among TANF stakeholders in urban centers. One outcome of this project, [the Urban Partnerships Initiative Online Toolkit](#), disseminates information on promising practices to the human services community. The toolkit is a collection of resources, templates, examples, and instruments to assist TANF administrators in achieving the goal of supporting families on the path to self-sufficiency.

The Urban Partnerships Initiative Online Toolkit, a collection of innovative and promising practices representing 26 cities of the Urban Partnerships Initiative from around the country, has been updated in 2012 with updated tools and programmatic updates for existing programs featured in the toolkit. The toolkit is a dynamic resource to help cities address some of the unique issues facing low-income populations, including those associated with substance abuse, poor mental health conditions, former incarceration, recent immigration, learning disabilities, and others. TANF administrators and others can find relevant tools related to intake, case management, work attachment, work retention, and transitional services.



Workforce Strategy Center (WSC) Webinar Taking Root: The Virginia Career Pathways System

In 2008, the Commonwealth of Virginia set in motion a process to build a statewide career pathways system. The purpose of that effort was to weave together and align the education, workforce development, and economic development systems at all education and training levels. Hear about the progress of that system, outcomes to date and lessons learned in [Taking Root: The Virginia Career Pathways System](#), a webinar featuring Virginia state leaders who will discuss their Career Pathways work. The webinar is designed to help practitioners and policy makers apply Virginia's lessons to their own state's circumstances.



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COLORADO WORKS WEBINARS

The Colorado Works training staff is pleased to provide access to the webinar recording for *CBMS Project 3277 - Workforce Development Redesign*. The session recording is now available through the [My CDHS Web Portal](#) and is approximately 49 minutes in length.

Program Location

CO Works (Community tab) » Training » Webinars (left menu)



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COUNTY ADMINISTRATORS MEETING

The Colorado Works County Administrators meeting will be held on **November 27, 2012** from 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM.

[Register Now](#)

Please indicate your lunch preference when you register.

Location

A/D Works
Lima Arapahoe Board Room
6954 S. Lima Street
Centennial, CO 80112

Meeting Room

<http://cohuman.adobeconnect.com/countyadmin/>

Teleconference Number: 1.866.244.8528

Participant Code: 107020#

Please note: this information is also available in the calendar in the [My CDHS Web Portal](#).

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TRAINING AND EVENTS SCHEDULE

County Administrators Meeting **Save the Date**

November 27, 2012

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

[Register Now](#)

Please indicate your lunch preference when you register.

Location

A/D Works
Lima Arapahoe Board Room
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Meeting Room

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Teleconference Number

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Participant Code

107020#

This information is also available in the calendar in the [My CDHS Web Portal](#).



March 7-8, 2013

Hyatt Regency Denver Tech Center

[Additional Information](#)

NEW Save the Date

Colorado Works Professional Development Academy (PDA)

June 3 - 7, 2013

Vail Marriott Mountain Resort and Spa

Colorado Works Webinars: In the Weeds with Colorado Works Policy

December 11, 2012

1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Webinar Location

<http://cohuman.adobeconnect.com/cw-webinars/>

Teleconference Number:

1.866.502.8312



Participant Code:
444488#

Training Cancellations and Changes

Knowledge Transfer (KT) Call

December 19, 2012
Noon - 1:00 p.m.

Webinar Location
<http://cohuman.adobeconnect.com/cbms-ktcall/>

Teleconference Number
800-591-2259

Participant Code
821166#

Knowledge Transfer (KT) Call
November 21, 2012

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TRIVIA ANSWER

The earliest permanent European settlements were planted in the San Luis Valley. San Luis, on the Culebra River, was settled in 1851, followed in the next few years by San Pedro, San Acacio, and Guadalupe.

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